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INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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COUNTRY	Bulgaria	REPORT	
SUBJECT	Travel Controls	DATE DISTR.	20 May 1955
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Controls in Border Areas

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1. [] the average Bulgarian citizen was aware of the danger of entering a restricted border zone without written official clearance. Anyone who wished to travel in a border zone for any purpose first had to apply for an "open letter" (otkrit list) through the Peoples' Militia Administration in the town or city where he lived. 25X1
2. Railroad tickets to any destination in a border zone could not be purchased unless an individual could produce a valid open letter permit. Documentation checks were conducted by security troops on trains and buses to insure that travelers possessed the open letter before they were allowed to proceed into a border zone. On arrival at his destination, the holder of an open letter was required to present himself to the local militia for registration.
3. The open letter indicated specific dates for travel. However, these dates could be extended at the destination under certain circumstances but only with great difficulty. Before an applicant was cleared to visit a border area, his purpose of travel was checked with the destination point to establish the validity of the trip.
4. Shortly after World War II, permits were relatively easy to obtain, but as time went on it became increasingly difficult. At the present time, even travel for compassionate reasons to visit close relatives who live in a border area is thoroughly investigated before the permit is granted. However, applicants with families or property in a border zone have a better 25X1

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(Note: Washington distribution indicated by "X"; Field distribution by "#")

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S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

- 2 -

25X1

chance of obtaining approval than those who do not.

5. Only three general categories of applicants for the open letter received approval: Communist officials, persons who had legal or official reasons for travel, and persons who traveled for urgent or compassionate reasons to visit close relatives. Residents of border zones who wished to visit the interior were also controlled by the open letter system.
6. The open letter permit was valid only if it was attached to the bearer's identity document. The open letter consisted of a single sheet of white paper, approximately 10 x 14 centimeters, with the following mimeographed items to be filled in:

Purpose of travel
Route of travel (the most direct)
Inclusive dates of travel
Bearer's name and date of birth
The number of the bearer's identity document
An official stamp and a signature

The open letter did not contain the bearer's photograph.

7. There were secret official lists of all cities and towns located in the restricted border zones. When a person applied for a railroad ticket to one of these cities or towns, the ticket office requested the person to procure an open letter.

8. Because of the special restrictive conditions along the border areas, [redacted] populations living in those areas were particularly conscious of spies, illegal border crossers, etc. The population was not only exposed to constant propaganda by the radio and the press to be alert regarding the "infiltration of agents of the war mongers" but were even taught in their schools to report the presence of strangers to border guard posts. [redacted] an instance when a child was responsible for the arrest of an illegal border crosser; this child was praised highly in Sofia's newspapers. From time to time, similar items appeared in the Bulgarian press.

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Travel Restrictions near Burgas

9. [redacted] a rural district 10 to 15 kilometers south of Burgas. [redacted] a restricted border zone which could be entered only by persons with a special permit. Because Burgas is approximately 80 kilometers from the Turkish border, [redacted] this restricted border zone was about 60 kilometers in depth.

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10. [redacted] boating on the Black Sea near Burgas was very strictly controlled.

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Travel Restrictions between Bulgaria and Rumania

11. Travel to Rumania could be accomplished only with visas and no special permit was required to visit any area along the Bulgarian-Rumanian border. [redacted] Bulgarian border troops patrolled the Danube mainly to control the movement of contraband.

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S-E-C-R-E-T

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S-E-C-R-E-T

- 3 -

25X1

25X1

Travel Restrictions along the Yugoslav Border

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12.

travel restrictions near the Yugoslav border were stricter in 1954

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no Bulgarian border guards

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at that time because the militia then exercised all travel controls.

Travel Abroad¹

13.

Ordinary Bulgarians were not permitted to travel to other Satellite countries for any personal reasons. Only in very rare cases were they permitted to travel abroad alone - even on official business.

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